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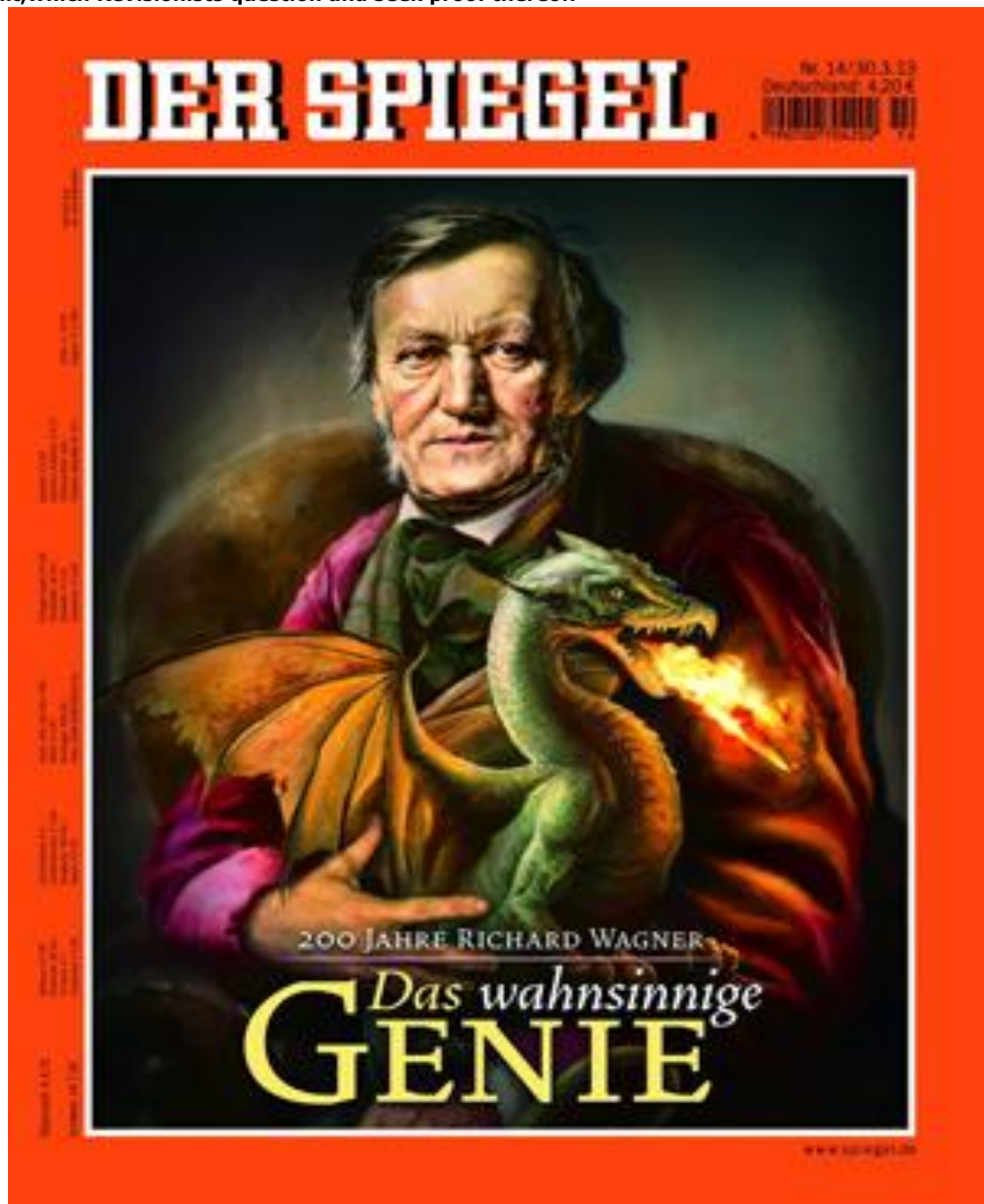
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Germany's one-time serious magazine, *Der Spiegel*, is still towing the post WWII re-education line, i.e. anything that was considered good by Germans during the National Socialist 12-year period must, of necessity, now be evil – forever. This kind of mindset had led Germans, such as Thilo Sarrazin, to assert that Germans are voluntarily eliminating themselves. His two books have remained best sellers: *Deutschland schafft sich ab*, translated as *Germany Is Doing Away With Itself*, 2010; *Europa braucht den Euro nicht*, translated as *Europe doesn't need the euro*, 2012. In this *Spiegel* review of Wagner's creativity there is always the Hitler card that attempts to belittle today's Wagner's opera productions. It's become a daily obsession to mention Holocaust, antisemitism, Jews and German guilt, which Revisionists question and seek proof thereof.





An 1877 photograph of Richard Wagner: The composer still casts a dark shadow today. Music and the Holocaust come together in that shadow: one of the most beautiful things created by man, and one of the worst things human beings have done. Wagner, the mad genius, was more than a composer. He also influenced Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich, even though he was already dead when the 12-year-old Hitler heard his music live for the first time when he attended a production of "Lohengrin" in the Austrian city of Linz in 1901.



Here, Wagner is pictured with his second wife Cosima, the daughter of Austrian-Hungarian composer Franz Liszt. Cosima was just one symbol of the many contradictions in Wagner's life. She was the life of a director who often worked with Wagner. She had a child fathered by Wagner and eventually married her after issuing a public apology.



Here, Austrian conductor Herbert von Karajan, the then director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (right), is pictured with the grandsons of Richard Wagner, Wolfgang (left) and Wieland (right), after attending a "Parsifal" performance at Bayreuth in 1960.



Even though Richard Wagner died before Hitler's rise to power, the Wagner family, through its famous festival of the composer's operas in Bayreuth, Germany, eventually established close ties with the dictator. Wagner's daughter-in-law Winifred Wagner (pictured here) often invited the future German dictator to the festival. When he was in prison writing "Mein Kampf," she even sent him ink, pencils and erasers.



**Here, Hitler can be seen visiting the Wagners' home in Bayreuth in 1938. In this picture, he is shown with Winifred. The Wagner heirs have tacitly agreed that Winifred will carry the Nazi burden, so as to draw attention away from the others. To this day, historians accuse the Wagners of withholding documents from those who study the Hitler years.**



**The specter of Hitler briefly returned to Bayreuth in 2012, when it was revealed that Russian bass-baritone Evgeny Nikitin (pictured here), who was to perform in "Lohengrin" at the festival, had a swastika tattooed on his chest.**





**Today, the Bayreuth Festival is led by Katharina Wagner (left), who is Wolfgang Wagner's daughter from his second marriage, and Eva Wagner-Pasquier (right) a daughter from his first marriage.**



**German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her husband Joachim Sauer are regular attendees of the Bayreuth Festival, the country's most important social event.**



**Here, the Festspielhaus where the operas are staged can be seen atop the Grünen Hügel, or Green Hill.**





**Prior to his death in 2008, Wolfgang Wagner is pictured here together with his daughter Katharina.**



**Wagner's operas remain some of the most important contributions to the genre of music and theatre. Productions are staged each year around the world. This photo shows a 2007 staging of "Das Rheingold" at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.**



**German conductor Christian Thielemann staged Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* at the most recent Bayreuth Festival.**



**Jonathan Livny is the head of the Israeli Wagner Society. His father, a Jew living in Germany, emigrated to Palestine. He was the only member of his family to survive. By founding the Israeli Wagner Society, he wanted "to break the last symbol of hatred of Germans". For his views, he says he has been spat at and received threatening phone calls. "The more they threaten me," he says, "the more I want there to be a concert. The music isn't anti-Semitic."**





**A 2010 staging of "Lohengrin" at the Bayreuth Festival.**

The article you are reading originally appeared in German in issue 14/2013 - March 30, 2013, of *DER SPIEGEL*.

## **Wagner's Dark Shadow: Can We Separate the Man from His Works?**

By Dirk Kurbjuweit

**Born 200 years ago, Germany's most controversial composer's music is cherished around the world, though it will always be clouded by his anti-Semitism and posthumous association with Adolf Hitler. Richard Wagner's legacy prompts the question: Can Germans enjoy any part of their history in a carefree way?**

Stephan Balkenhol is not deeply moved, overwhelmed or delighted. He doesn't brood over the myth and the evil. It doesn't bother him and he isn't disgusted. He rolls a cigarette, gets up, digs around in his record cabinet and pulls out an old "Tannhäuser" by Richard Wagner, a Hungarian recording he bought at a flea market. He puts on the record, and the somewhat crackling music of the prelude begins to play. Balkenhol sits down again and smokes as slowly as he speaks. He doesn't mention the music, and he still doesn't feel deeply moved, overwhelmed or delighted. For him, it's just music. That makes Balkenhol, 56, an exception, an absolute one among those who concern themselves with Wagner. Balkenhol remains unruffled. He drops two steaks into a pan, and as they sizzle,

"Tannhäuser" fades into the background.

Balkenhol is a sculptor who was commissioned to create a sculpture of Wagner. He has until May 22, the composer's 200th birthday, when the new monument will be unveiled in Wagner's native Leipzig. This is the year of Wagner, but Balkenhol is keeping his cool. He isn't worried about creating a realistic likeness of the composer, with his distinctive face, high forehead, large nose and strong chin. Wagner was somewhat ugly, and Balkenhol won't try to portray him any differently.

### **The Composer Who Influenced Hitler**

He won't need a great deal of bronze. Wagner was 1.66 meters (5'3") tall, and Balkenhol doesn't intend to make the statue much taller. He wants to give the sculpture a human dimension, avoiding exaggeration and pathos: a short man on a pedestal. But that

wouldn't have been enough, because it would have belied Wagner's importance, so Balkenhol is placing an enormous shadow behind the sculpture. People can interpret it as they wish, says Balkenhol: as a symbol of a work that is larger than the man who created it, or as the dark shadow Wagner still casts today.

Music and the Holocaust come together in that shadow: one of the most beautiful things created by man, and one of the worst things human beings have ever done. Wagner, the mad genius, was more than a composer. He also influenced Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich, even though he was already dead when the 12-year-old Hitler heard his music live for the first time, when he attended a production of "Lohengrin" in the Austrian city of Linz in 1901. Describing the experience, during which he stood

in a standing-room only section of the theater, Hitler wrote: "I was captivated immediately."

Many others feel the same way. They listen to Wagner and are captivated, overwhelmed, smitten and delighted. Nike Wagner, the composer's great-granddaughter, puts the question that this raises in these terms: "Should we allow ourselves to listen to his works with pleasure, even though we know that he was an anti-Semite?" There's a bigger issue behind this question: Can Germans enjoy any part of their history in a carefree way?

The Nazi years lie like a bolt over the memory of a good Germany, of the composers, poets and philosophers who gave the world so much beauty and enlightenment in the 18th and 19th centuries: Kant, Hegel, Goethe, Schiller, Beethoven, Wagner and the Romantics. Nevertheless, the Germans elected a man like Hitler and, under his leadership, unleashed an inferno. In only a few years, a nation of culture was turned into one of modern barbarians. Is it not also possible that Germany's illustrious past in fact led it irrevocably towards the rise of the Nazis? Could the philosophical abstraction, artistic elation and yearning for collective salvation that drove the country also have contributed to its ultimate derailing into the kind of mania that defined the years of National Socialism? After all, it wasn't just the dull masses that followed the Führer. Members of the cultural elite were also on their knees.

Some were later shunned as a result, at least temporarily, like writer Ernst Jünger, poet Gottfried Benn and philosopher Martin Heidegger. But the situation is more complicated with Wagner, because he wasn't even alive during the Nazi years. Nevertheless, Hitler was able to learn from him. There was a bit of Wagner in Hitler, which is why the fascist leader also figures prominently in our memory of the composer.

It also explains why the shadow over the composer's legacy is so big. Any discussion of Wagner is also a discussion of denatured history, and of the inability of Germans to fully appreciate themselves and the beautiful, noble sides of their own history. Anyone who studies Wagner can perceive two strong forces, the light force of music and the dark force of the Nazi era. There are many people who cannot and do not wish to ignore this effect. They are at the mercy of Wagner's power. These are the types of people at issue here, people whose lives have fallen under Wagner's spell and who don't know what to make of their fascination.

### **Hitler as Wagner's Creation**

Journalist Joachim Köhler, 60, described the dark side of Wagner in an especially drastic manner in his 1997 book "Wagner's Hitler -- The Prophet and His Disciple." In the 500-page work, published in German, Köhler portrays Hitler as Wagner's creation. When Hitler heard the opera "Rienzi," Köhler writes, quoting the Nazi leader, it occurred to him for the first time that he too could become a tribune of the people or a politician.

Wagner's hateful essay "Judaism in Music" offered Hitler an idea of how far one could go with anti-Semitism. The composer invokes the downfall of the Jews. Köhler detected plenty of anti-Semitism in Wagner's operas. Characters like Mime in "Siegfried" and Kundry in "Parsifal," he argued, are evil caricatures of the supposedly inferior Jews. Köhler felt that "Parsifal" anticipated the racial theories of the Nazis, quoting propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels as saying: "Richard Wagner taught us what the Jew is." In the 1920s, Wagner's daughter-in-law Winifred invited the young Hitler to attend the Bayreuth Festival on the Green Hill in the Bavarian city of Bayreuth. When he was in prison writing "Mein Kampf," she sent him ink, pencils and

erasers. According to Köhler's interpretation in 1997, the Green Hill was a fortress of evil and Wagner the forefather of the Holocaust.

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### **Part 2: Germany's Most Important Social Event**

The scene is that fortress of evil, Green Hill in Bayreuth, on July 25, 2012, the premier of "The Flying Dutchman." German Chancellor Angela Merkel is in the audience, together with a half-dozen top politicians from Berlin. It's hot, the men are wearing tuxedos and the women long dresses, and their hairdos seem to shrink as the hours wear on. The Bayreuth Festival is still the country's most important social event, but it is also a drably German affair. The guests consume bratwurst in large numbers, the famous bratwurst of the Bayreuth Festival. Nowadays there is even a lobster bratwurst, which says a lot. But even the dressed-up version of bratwurst is still just a bratwurst, and German society is still a bratwurst society, no matter how sophisticated its behavior.

When the music is playing, the Festspielhaus (Festival Theater) soon becomes a disaster area. The seats are hard and packed tightly together, and it's warm and muggy inside. The audience becomes restless, the men remove their tuxedo jackets, the women fan themselves with their programs, the air becomes thick with body odor and an old woman in the lower right-hand section of the theater has to be carried out by medical personnel. Soon mobile phones are slipping out of the pockets of the tuxedo jackets, which the men have placed across their knees, crashing to the floor while Christian Thielemann directs the "Dutchman." A young man is sitting around the middle of the orchestra section, with his hand on his companion's knee. His body twitches whenever the singers appear, as if he were trying to contribute to the success of the production. When applause



erupts at the end, he gets up and pushes his way past people still in their seats and heads for the exit. The singers are applauded, the director is applauded, there is much clapping and stamping of feet and cheering, and a flood of bravos, and then the young man from the orchestra steps onto the stage. The audience's response is even louder than before, but now it consists of boos and whistles, loud and shrill.

### **Hitler Returns to Green Hill**

Eight months later, the young man, Jan Philipp Gloger is sitting in a restaurant in the southwestern city of Mainz. He directed "Dutchman" in 2012. "I was prepared for the boos," he says, and in fact directors in Bayreuth are often met with harsh criticism. Gloger, 32, says he can live with the boos, which he considers normal. But in his case there was also something else, at it was worse than the catcalls. Suddenly Hitler was there again, and Hitler's presence in Bayreuth is a big deal, even today.

Hitler didn't know very much about Wagner when he received the invitation to the Green Hill. In the biographies he read, Wagner was portrayed "as a person with a horrible life." He used women, deceived friends and was constantly groveling for money to pay for his luxurious lifestyle. One case, in particular, is illustrative of what Wagner was like. He was in a relationship with Cosima von Bülow, the wife of a director who often worked for Wagner. She had a child fathered by Wagner, which she foisted on her husband. When rumors surfaced about the affair, Wagner wrote a public apology for Cosima, which he had signed by his patron Ludwig II, King of Bavaria. Wagner later married Cosima.

He was fleeing from creditors when he was caught in a severe storm in the North Sea. According to legend, the experience inspired him to compose "The Flying Dutchman." Gloger wanted to stage the opera without any allusions to Wagner's anti-Semitism or the Nazis. He

wanted to avoid the past and the constant references to Hitler and create a more contemporary production. He turned the Dutchman into a "modern traveler" who suffers from "restlessness and emotional emptiness." The singer he chose for the role was Russian bass-baritone [Evgeny Nikitin](#), who, according to Gloger, demonstrated "immense empathy" during rehearsals and sometimes wept as he sang.

Gloger was watching the rehearsals for "Lohengrin" in Bayreuth when he was told that there was a problem. Runes that had also been used by the SS were tattooed on Nikitin's body. Gloger sat down for a beer with Nikitin, who told him that the images were spiritual symbols of the Vikings. Then it emerged that Nikitin also had a tattoo on his chest that looked like a swastika. The premier was in five days.

Suddenly German's past had come back to haunt Germany's present. Could an opera singer perform in Bayreuth with runes and a swastika on his chest, despite "Judaism in Music," and despite Winifred and Hitler? Nikitin withdrew from the role, Gloger hastily rehearsed with another bass-baritone, and on the day of the premier he tried to explain to journalists at a press conference that it was his production, that he and his team had done a great deal of hard work, and so on. It was very hot in the press room, and it was a very German situation. Someone said that Hitler wasn't everything, and that everyone shouldn't always obsess about him. In the end, though, the conversation inevitably returned to the topic of Hitler.

As Gloger tells his story at the restaurant in Mainz, he comes across as one of the defeated in German history. He says that you only get a chance like that once, and that it was "presumably the biggest production of my life." But what remains of it is the image of a swastika on the chest of a singer

who ended up not singing because of it. Gloger looks sad today, a man who reached for the stars at an early age and, like Siegfried, failed tragically. Those who become involved with Wagner can soon come across like one of his characters. There is still a spell, both good and evil alike, hanging over the Green Hill.

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### **Part 3: A Wagner Enthusiast in Israel**

Jonathan Livny, 65, experiences the good spell every time he visits Bayreuth, and he comes here often. During the intermissions, he eavesdrops on the conversations of other audience members, and is pleased when he hears Hebrew, his own language. Livny is Israeli, and he loves the music of Wagner.

His father, a Jew living in Germany, recognized during the 1930s that calamity was brewing and emigrated to Palestine. He was the only member of his family to do so and the rest perished in the Holocaust. His son Jonathan says today: "God died in Auschwitz."

Livny is sitting in the lobby of a Jerusalem hotel, next to a Christmas tree that hasn't been taken down yet. He weeps when he talks about his lost family. He says that his father took along records from Germany, including Wagner's "The Mastersingers of Nuremberg." According to author Köhler, Hitler could hum and whistle the melodies of the opera. "My father loved Wagner," says Livny, who travels halfway around the world to see Wagner's most important work, "The Ring of the Nibelung." He lists all the places where he has already seen it performed: Toronto, San Francisco, Strasbourg, Berlin, Paris, Sydney, London, Milan, Vienna, Los Angeles.

Livny speaks quickly and briskly. He wears colorful glasses and drove to the hotel on a motor scooter. He has tried twice to have Wagner performed publicly in Israel. Although it isn't prohibited, Livny failed both times.

### **A Hideous Man Who Made 'Heavenly Music'**

To some extent the now 86-year-old Israeli journalist Noah Klieger may be to blame for this. Klieger survived Auschwitz by pretending to be a boxer. The larger food rations for the boxing team saved him. Klieger speaks as animatedly as Livny, but not as quickly.

Klieger doesn't oppose concerts in Israel because Wagner was an anti-Semite. If that were the case, he says, he would also have to take a stance against performances of the music of Richard Strauss. "Wagner was more than an anti-Semite. He wanted the extermination of all Jews," he says. He cites as evidence a letter to Cosima, who had told her husband about a fire in a Vienna theater which killed hundreds, half of them Jews, during a performance of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's "Nathan the Wise". Wagner replied: "All Jews should burn to death in a performance of 'Nathan'." People can certainly listen to Wagner at home, says Klieger, but he feels that a public concert would be intolerable. Given his public tensions with Livny, Klieger even refused to take part in a public discussion with him.

Of course, that's not all that surprising given that Livny called Klieger "a professional Holocaust survivor." In Israel, this is considered a vilification of people whose position in public debates is shaped by their experiences during the Nazi era. "Wagner was a hideous man, but he made heavenly music," says Livny. He separates the man from his works, which is the reason he chooses not to pursue his cause this year. If he did, he says, it would look as though he were trying to honor Wagner in the year of Wagner, which he isn't. For Livny, it's all about the music.

Two years ago, he founded the Israeli Wagner Society "to break the last symbol of the hatred of Germans." Volkswagen has become a popular brand of car among Israelis today, says Livny, "even

though it was Hitler's invention." That's why he doesn't understand people like Klieger.

Livny says he has been spat at and has received threatening phone calls. "The more they threaten me," he says, "the more I want there to be a concert. The music isn't anti-Semitic."

But is music even possible without context, and without the history of its creation and impact? Let's look at two attempts to talk about the music, and nothing but the music.

Christian Thielemann, 54, a director who specializes in Wagner, knows what it's like to perform his music in Bayreuth. You have to "remain fluid," former Festival Director Wolfgang Wagner once told him, and his wife Gudrun said that it was important to "go the distance." And that's what Thielemann does: He remains fluid and he goes the distance, whatever that means. There is a telephone in the orchestra pit, and when it lit up during rehearsals, he knew that it was festival director Wolfgang Wagner calling to tell him that it was "too loud, too loud, too loud." It's easy to get too loud in Bayreuth, says Thielemann, which is why it is important never to direct "forte." "If the director is enjoying himself too much, it's the beginning of the end," says Thielemann. There is apparently so much power in this music that a director must treat it gently to prevent it from becoming an assault.

#### **A State of Ecstasy and Intoxication**

Markus Kabisch, 45, is adept at describing what it's like to listen to this music. He studied music and is now an entrepreneur in the solar industry. He lives in Leipzig, Wagner's birthplace, and at some point he noticed that the composer "is hardly ever mentioned in Leipzig." He established an association with the goal of giving the city a monument of its famous son, but donors were few and far between. "I suspect," he says, "that there is a concern that it might not fit to the image of a liberal,

cosmopolitan city." He raised the money elsewhere, and now artist Stephan Balkenhol is working on a sculpture that incorporates a shadow.

Kabisch loves Wagner's music but says he "couldn't handle it every day." He describes it as being, "extremely captivating; when you listen to it the ego and the individual disappear, and you become intoxicated, entering a state of ecstasy." Kabisch calls it "overpowering music." "That's what is so dangerous about it, and it's why this music was so well-suited to politics in the Third Reich." When the conversation turns to Wagner, politics is never far away.

Wagner himself conceived his music as political. He didn't want to be merely an artist, but to build a new society, a society of the emotionally transported, of people who seek love instead of striving for money and power. His music was also a propaganda tool for this idea.

This was convenient for the Nazis, because they too used intoxication, ecstasy and overpowering images in their propaganda, such as at their Nuremberg rallies. In the Germans, they encountered a pronounced susceptibility to emotional turmoil and pathos, which is particularly evident in German Romanticism, in the poetry of Friedrich Schiller or the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. An essentially German longing permeates Wagner's music.

In German politics, this pathos ceased to be possible after Hitler, in contrast to the United States or France. Germans can still relish in the music of Wagner, as long as they take the position that the music is innocent or that they don't care about the political context of art. Then it becomes an innocent pathos. This is one of the aspects of Germans' enjoyment of Wagner.

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#### **Part 4: The Wagners: A German Family Straight Out of Greek Mythology**

This is how Nike Wagner, the composer's great-granddaughter,



answers her own question: "Yes, the composer of 'Tristan' was an anti-Semite and probably would have liked to burn down Paris. Wagner remains a moral problem. Nevertheless, today no one listens to Wagner from an 'ideological' perspective anymore. That's why we must allow the work to be separated from the character of its 200-year-old creator. Anti-Semitism clearly cannot be proven in his works."

She is saying this in the lobby of the Hotel Adlon in Berlin. One is tempted to search for clues of her great-grandfather in her face, but there are none. Wagner had coarse features, while Nike Wagner is petite with fine features.

Let's now take a look at the family itself. Given that there are so many Wagners, a small, albeit incomplete family tree is necessary in order to understand them better, one that only names the characters in this story. Here it goes: Richard and Cosima Wagner had a son named Siegfried, who married Winifred. They had two sons, Wolfgang and Wieland, who were the joint directors of the Bayreuth Festival from 1951 to 1966. Nike is Wieland's daughter, Eva Wagner-Pasquier is Wolfgang's daughter from his first marriage, and Katharina is his daughter from his second marriage.

For Germany, the Wagners are what the Atreidai are in Greek mythology. One of them, Atreus, committed a grave sin, casting a curse over all subsequent generations, beginning with Agamemnon and Menelaus, followed by Iphigenia, Orestes and Electra. The family is marked by enmity, as is the Wagner family.

#### **The Nazi Stain [what rubbish!-AI]**

Nike Wagner lived in the Villa Wahnfried, which her great-grandfather had built in Bayreuth, and she more or less grew up in the Festspielhaus, the festival theater, where she played as a child and watched rehearsals. "In private, we were more likely to listen to Bach

and Beethoven, while the teenagers were wild about Elvis Presley," she recalls. A strange, four-meter wall towered over the garden. Her father had it built to avoid having to look at his mother Winifred, who lived next door and continued to receive her old Nazi friends until her death in 1980. She once complained that the wall blocked out the sun.

Her father never entered his mother's house, says Nike Wagner. He accused her of dragging him into the Nazi affair. Wieland Wagner was Hitler's darling in Bayreuth. Hitler gave him a green Mercedes convertible for his 18th birthday, and he was favored as the heir apparent on the Green Hill. Wagner joined the Nazi Party and made a lot of money when he was granted the privilege of selling photographic portraits of Hitler. Later, as festival director, Wieland managed to portray himself among German intellectuals as the good Wagner by drawing attention to his grandfather's artistic sophistication. Did Nike Wagner reproach him for his closeness to Hitler? Her father was 28 at the end of the Nazi era, so that his actions could not be attributed entirely to his mother's influence. "My father separated himself from the Nazi past in two ways: by condemning his mother and by esthetically purifying the stage. Of course, that didn't mean that Bayreuth suddenly became 'Nazi-free' or 'morally reeducated'." She doesn't suffer from historical amnesia, but she is protective of her father. When Germans remember their history, the issue of what to preserve is always a key concern. What should remain, and what aspects of German history should continue to be portrayed in a positive light? Richard Wagner? And if not, at least Wieland Wagner, who made Bayreuth socially acceptable among intellectuals once again?

Katharina Wagner, 34, takes a similar approach to her cousin Nike. During a discussion of the Nazi era in a Berlin restaurant, she quickly

turns to Winifred. The family has tacitly agreed that Winifred will carry the Nazi burden, so as to draw attention away from the others. But it wasn't that clear at all. In her book "Die Familie Wagner" ("The Wagner Family"), Brigitte Hamann writes that Winifred helped Jews during the Nazi period.

To this day, historians accuse the Wagners of withholding documents from those who study the Hitler years. In response, Nike and Katharina Wagner say that they, unlike others in the family, are willing to cooperate in every respect.

Katharina and Nike are completely different women. There is a sturdy and solid aspect to Katharina's demeanor that would seem more at home in a pub than in the family of a man who personifies German high culture. But her father Wolfgang and her great-grandfather had similar character traits.

Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner were not on good terms, even though they ran the Bayreuth Festival together. According to Nike Wagner, when Wieland died in 1966, his brother measured his apartment and then demanded rent from the brother's widow, Nike's mother, who was apparently unable to pay and forced to vacate the apartment, together with her children.

#### **'Just Because You're a Wagner Doesn't Mean You're an Artist'**

Nike Wagner lost her childhood home and later became a sharp critic of her Uncle Wolfgang, who ran the festival until 2008 and died two years later. She wanted to become his successor, together with her cousin Eva Wagner-Pasquier. In yet another twist in the battle between the clan, Eva broke off the alliance once it became clear to her that she would only get the job if she teamed up with Katharina. The two half-sisters have run the Bayreuth Festival since 2008, with Katharina also working at times as a director.

"I'm not passing judgment," says Nike. "The two women should go ahead and prove that they can do it." She does have a few bones to pick, though, such as over "the incompetence in the renovation of Villa Wahnfried." Later in the conversation, she says sharply: "Just because your name is Wagner doesn't necessarily mean you're an artist."

Katharina Wagner shrugs her shoulders. Of course she has nothing against her cousin, she says, brushing off Nike's remarks with the composure of a winner. She is running the world-famous Wagner festival in Bayreuth, while her cousin is in charge of the art festival in Weimar. The somewhat coarser side of the family has prevailed over the more sophisticated side. That's just the way it is. But is there any hostility? No, says Katharina, of course not.

Nike goes to Bayreuth every summer. Sometimes she sees Katharina, but she doesn't speak with her. The two cousins have never spoken a word with each other, and Nike is still waiting for an invitation to reconcile over a glass of champagne. Still, she never approaches her cousin. She takes her seat in the Festspielhaus and listens to the music of her great-grandfather.

#### **Was Wagner a Leftist?**

In 1986, political scientist Udo Bermbach, now 75, sat there for the first time and watched the Ring cycle. He became obsessed with Wagner after that, with both the music and the composer's political side. He shifted his academic focus and developed into an expert on the musician. His book, "Mythos Wagner" ("The Wagner Myth"), has just been published.

Bermbach did not see Wagner as the proto-fascist Köhler describes in his book "Wagner's Hitler." For Bermbach, Wagner was also a leftist. The composer had a revolutionary phase in 1848/49, when half of Germany was fighting for democracy and freedom. During

the Dresden uprising in May 1849, he wrote flyers, transported hand grenades, was in close contact with the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin and observed the approaching Prussian troops from the tower of the city's Church of the Holy Cross. When the revolutionaries' cause was lost, he fled to Zürich, where he lived in exile until 1858.

His time in Zürich was a wild period of his life. He went to parties, indulged in a romance with a married woman, Mathilde Wesendonck, and wrote to Franz Liszt: "I must be going mad here. It's the only solution!"

When he returned to Germany, he reconciled with the monarchies, especially with Ludwig II, who helped him pay for the Bayreuth Festival. "There was no money to be had from the leftists," says Bermbach.

What remained was the utopia of a better society, one that was not ruled by money. While in Dresden in 1849, Wagner wrote the poetic but somewhat awkward lines: "The torch, it burns brightly, it burns deeply and broadly / burning to ashes everything around it / consecrated to the worship of Mammon!"

His Ring cycle is an anti-capitalism piece, making it highly topical. The drama begins with a real estate speculation by Wotan, the father of the gods, who has the giants Fafner and Fasolt build him a house that he cannot afford.

In his utopias, too, Wagner uniquely recreates the German soul. The notion of a better world is experienced in modern-day Germany in every organic supermarket, and it's reflected in the success of the Green Party, the social welfare state and the public's resentment of power politics, as evidenced for a brief period by the success of the Pirate Party. Anti-capitalism is widespread.

In his portrayal of utopias, Wagner conveyed ideas from both the left and the right.

For Wagner, striking a chord was the key to building a better community, which is something both the Nazis and the Communists also envisioned. The Nazis added racism to their concept, which is why they made Wagner one of their own. The left distanced itself from him for the same reason.

Udo Bermbach believes that this was a "major historical mistake by the left." Because of their disgust with anti-Semitism, they "abandoned him to the right." In fact, he notes, the "democrats on the whole betrayed him." Bermbach believes that if the left had claimed him, he would not have been as useful to the Nazis and would not have been discredited quite as much. But Bermbach also believes that Köhler's book is exaggerated, saying that Hitler was not a creation of Wagner's.

#### **A 'Prophet and a Clown'**

Joachim Köhler is a slim man who bears a slight resemblance to Wagner's friend Friedrich Nietzsche. He speaks in a benign way and is surprisingly soft-spoken for the author of such an aggressive book as "Wagner's Hitler." Sitting in an Italian restaurant in Hamburg, he talks about how he hit upon the idea for the work.

In the 1990s, when Köhler was working for the weekly newsmagazine *Stern*, he became irate when he read the memoirs of Wolfgang Wagner, who he believes "whitewashed his story in a way that was almost shameless and portrayed Hitler as their friendly Uncle Wolf." The book was Köhler's impetus for writing his own work on the subject.

"I approached the subject in the manner of a detective, like a Sherlock Holmes, for example," says Köhler. He pauses for a moment. "What I missed, however, was the genius of the century, 'the last of the Titans'." Köhler, surprisingly enough, seems moved.

Today, commenting on his theory that Wagner was partly to blame for the Holocaust, he says: "Hardly any



more so that the anti-Semites Hegel, Marx and Schopenhauer. An intellectual anti-Semitism was almost socially acceptable at the time." He lists the Jewish directors with whom Wagner worked, and says that he "had Jewish friends throughout his life, which would be hard to imagine with a dyed-in-the-wool anti-Semite."

But how, then, did the repugnant essay "Judaism in Music" come about? Köhler says: "Wagner was often one thing and its opposite at the same time. He was a passionate vegetarian, but he couldn't do without his daily steak. He had a tendency to stretch a point." Most of all, says Köhler, Wagner was simultaneously a "prophet and a clown."

Köhler launches into a lengthy speech about Wagner's humorous side. There was "a tendency to wear women's clothing; he subscribed to Paris fashion magazines and secretly wore silk negligees that he had designed himself. Wagner was difficult to paint, because he was constantly making faces, kidding around, doing somersaults and headstands. As a theatrical person, he didn't distinguish between theater and reality, and he seemed to be saying to everyone: Don't take me so seriously."

Was it all just fun and games? Was his anti-Semitism somehow a quirk and therefore tolerable? Apparently many things are possible with Wagner. As he sits there, Köhler comes across as a non-believer, a critic who became a disciple, and he clearly rejects the thesis of his book, when he says: "I no longer see Hitler being directly influenced by Wagner. Hitler didn't become Hitler because he listened to 'Rienzi'."

In the end, Köhler too has succumbed to Wagner's power. Even during his lifetime, the man who so greatly despised power was someone who could quickly become overpowering, to his women, his friends and his employees. He had

a vehemence that was difficult to escape, a vehemence that was evident in his manner, his works and his longing for a new society. It is this Titanism to which Köhler has succumbed, this yearning for greatness, which was once a typically German trait, at least until Hitler's time. That too can only be savored in part when listening to Wagner today. With Wagner, it's possible to break the seal that has been placed over the years from 1933 to 1945, but it requires turning a blind eye to some things.

Part 5: Preserving the Memory of Wagner in Venice

Something is still missing in this story: love. With Wagner, of course, there is no alternative but to portray love in its grandest form. He has made love grand through death and tragedy, in characters like Siegfried and Brünnhilde, Tristan and Isolde.

Alessandra Althoff-Pugliese is an attractive, elegant woman of an indeterminate age. It's fair to say that she isn't young, but old isn't a word that fits her, either. She is the chair of the Wagner Society in Venice, a city that was important to the composer. He worked here often, and he died in the city, on Feb. 13, 1883.

It's a sunny day and Althoff-Pugliese, wearing a pretty hat, takes us to the places that were important to Wagner. The palace where he once rented 15 rooms for his family and his entourage is now a casino. There are brightly flashing slot machines, and the casino management has its offices in some of the rooms Wagner once occupied. Althoff-Pugliese has made it her mission to reclaim room after room for her society. She has already succeeded with the room in which he was writing when he was seized with a painful convulsion. She is very lively in her account, even accompanying her stories with a few ballet-like steps.

On the morning of Feb. 13, Wagner had had an argument with Cosima over a visit by another woman. He

was writing at his desk when a maid, Betty, heard him moan. A doctor pronounced Wagner dead at about 3 p.m. Before the fountain pen fell from his hand, he wrote: "The process of emancipation of the female only takes place amid ecstatic convulsions. Love - Tragedy." As last words, they were fitting indeed.

At around noon, Althoff-Pugliese takes us to a restaurant that she and her husband liked to frequent. She was an opera singer and was performing at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, where she met Giuseppe Pugliese, a music critic and the founder of the Venice Wagner society. He was much older than she was, but it became a great love story. Pugliese has been dead for three years, and today his widow is continuing his work, preserving the memory of Richard Wagner in Venice.

She recommends fish for lunch, together with a white wine. She apologizes for taking red with hers. She says that whenever she comes to this restaurant, she drinks the red wine her husband used to imbibe, a Merlot from the Veneto region. She also orders dishes her husband used to eat, and talks a great deal about him -- not in a sad way but perhaps with a touch of melancholy. Most of all, however, she sounds fulfilled, almost as if she had found a way to continue her life with Pugliese. When she puts on her hat again after the meal, she says that it was her husband's hat. It's a moment in which one imagines hearing the music of Wagner, disturbingly beautiful music, filled with love and tragedy, one of his quieter passages, not quite as bombastic as the rest.

*Translated from the German by Christopher Sultan*

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/richardwagneracomposer-forever-associated-with-hitler-a-892600.html>

## Yin and Yang – Guys and Dolls

### The case against same-sex marriage and in defence of the Laws of Nature

By David Brockschmidt

#### Foreword

*The philosophies of one age have become the absurdities of the next, and the foolishness of yesterday becomes the wisdom of tomorrow.*

– Sir William Osler - Aequanimitas and other addresses.

When African leaders talk to their audience about the foolish decadence of the West, especially that of their ex-colonial masters, they are also addressing the western phenomenon of same-sex marriage.

Describing the fact that in the west men marry men and women marry women, their audiences break out in hysterical laughter.

In discussions between traditional Africans and so-called liberal progressive westerners, the Africans make one thing clear to the west:

*'You people have lost the plot, you are in decline and you violate the laws of nature. To top it off you come to us and have the cheek to lecture us on freedom and democracy. Your so-called modern ways of life, where anything goes, leads to moral and intellectual bankruptcy. How dare you lecture us. Go home and self-destruct, if you have to. We don't need you and we don't want you here.'*

Of course, the Africans and most other cultures and races are right. Oswald Spengler's prophecy of western decline is fulfilling itself. The disintegration of Athens, Sparta and Rome are a warning example here.

I remember a scene from an old decadent Woody Allen film where Woody is caught with a sheep in his bed, dressed up in negligee and suspenders.

The ethicist, Peter Singer, sees no problem of love between man and beast and at the same time sanctions the killing of disabled infants.

It's Sodom and Gomorrah all over again.

These so-called liberal norms in western society today regarding same-sex couples and their need to raise children violates the Laws of Nature. This will backfire. These children will be the victims because blood is thicker than water. Even without children same-sex marriages are absurd. The ex-prime minister and left-wing progressive Paul Keating said that two blokes or two sheilas with a cocker spaniel does not constitute a family. I agree – and so does our current Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. She made it clear that marriage is for Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve.

The real problem in our society is not homophobia but heterophobia – note the definition: heterophobia – the fear of and antagonism towards heterosexuals and heterosexuality.

I rest my case and leave you with this same-sex puzzle.

If Heather has two mommies, and each of them has two brothers, and one of those brothers has another man for a roommate. How many uncles does Heather have?

#### Afterword

*Everything has been said before, but since nobody listens we have to keep going back and beginning all over again* – Andre Gide

Ref.: Daphne Patai – *Heterophobia*. Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. ISBN 0-8476-8988-3.

#### The Myth of Male Power

A recent article from *The Times* of London and re-published in the *Australian*, 28 March 2013, 'Western Women prefer girly guys', caught my eyes.

The so-called scientific research is just another feminist nonsense story. It is typical PCGC - politically correctness stuff for general consumption.

Their real agenda is their control of men, in order to get what they want and not what is good and necessary for males and females in order to raise children and have a family.

Men should not try to be women and women should not try to be men. This story is researched by a feminist, written by a feminist and published for other feminists.

The Germaine Greers of this world do not represent the vast majority of women. Women want strong men to have children with, be respected by them, and secure the future of their offspring.

Be assured, real women don't want girly-guys. They prefer Hugh Jackman or George Clooney to Boy George or Tiny Tim.

Psychologist Thionna Moores assumptions that girly blokes stick it out with the family for the long term while real blokes go walk about is more nonsense. Real men, the man feminists hate, stick it out with their women and children, while the easy-to-be-controlled girly guys prefer to hang out with the Sydney Gay Parade luvvies who desperately want to be women.

The world doesn't need more feminists but womanists.

A womanist is a woman who loves her man and their offsprings she regards men as partners and women as equals to men.

A feminist is an unhappy woman who dislikes men and herself. She does not love other women in a true unconditional way either.

Love protects, nurtures, holds and creates; hate destroys all, including the hater.

'Men have defined "power" as feeling obligated to earn money someone else spends while they die sooner. No woman would be stupid enough to call that power'

– Warren Farrell: *The Myth of Male Power: Why men are the disposable sex*, Finch. ISBN 1-876451-30-0.



## Paul Hogan's battle with Swiss firm for 'stolen' \$32m

BY: SUSANNAH MORAN, [The Australian](#), April 15, 2013 12:00AM

ACTOR Paul Hogan is facing an uphill battle to recover more than \$US34 million (\$32.3m) held in a Swiss bank account, with the funds alleged to have been misappropriated by the Swiss financial advisory firm Strachans.

Court action seeking \$80m in damages from Strachans, led by the trustee of the trust Hogan is the ultimate beneficiary of, was recently unsuccessful in the US.

Strachans is the company Hogan and his artistic offside John Cornell retained to arrange a series of offshore trusts and financial arrangements dealing with their lucrative Crocodile Dundee earnings. Clients who used the services of Strachans found themselves under scrutiny in 2005 when the Australian Taxation Office launched the \$430m Wickenby tax investigation into offshore tax fraud.

Hogan has long maintained he paid his fair share of tax and, along with Cornell, settled his massive tax dispute last year. A separate criminal investigation into the pair was dropped in November 2010. The exact size of Hogan's tax bill remains shrouded in mystery but he told *The Australian* in 2010 he couldn't even pay "10 per cent" of what the tax office was asking.

The latest twist in the saga involving Hogan's use of offshore entities took place recently in the US District Court in California, where US lawyer Schuyler Moore launched a court case after the Swiss refused to hand over documents relating to the Carthage Trust - a corporation registered in the British Virgin Islands. Mr Moore is the trustee of Carthage and launched the case in December last year, seeking \$80m from Strachans. Hogan was not a party to the case, nor did he provide evidence.

"Petitioner Schuyler Moore, as trustee of the Carthage Trust, seeks to prevent Respondent Grasselle SA from causing irreparable injury to the Carthage Trust and its beneficiary, Paul Hogan, by absconding with over \$34m of the Carthage Trust's property," court documents filed in the US state.

Grasselle is the nominal owner of a bank account at Corna Banca SA in Switzerland holding the \$US34m. Grasselle is "indirectly owned" by Strachans, according to the court documents.

But this company allegedly has "suddenly and without warning taken the position it does not hold the assets of the Carthage Trust" and refused to hand over bank statements and records. The two signatories to the bank account are Strachans's principles Philip Eglishaw and Philip de Figueiredo. Despite being wanted by authorities for tax-related offences, Mr Eglishaw has so far avoided arrest and extradition to Australia.

Mr de Figueiredo was not so lucky, and, following a lengthy extradition process, pleaded guilty to three counts of defrauding the commonwealth in October and was sentenced to six years' jail. He is likely to serve two years and five months after agreeing to assist authorities in further investigations. There are fears the money held in the Swiss bank account has been moved and Mr Hogan will never see it again.

"Grasselle also has refused to provide any evidence establishing that the funds have not been moved or depleted and has refused to turn over the funds to the Carthage Trustee," the documents state. "According to Grasselle's representations, the balance of funds in the account is in excess of \$34m.

"However, because Grasselle refuses to provide any sort of documentation attesting to the balance of the funds, and because one of the individuals who has signature authority over the account - De Figueiredo - recently pled guilty to conspiracy and fraud, and because Australia is seeking the extradition of the other principal - Eglishaw - in connection with alleged fraud, the Carthage Trustee has good cause to believe that Grasselle has absconded with or spent all or a portion of the funds or intends to do so."

Documents tendered in Australian court cases reveal Hogan relied on Australian

and overseas accounting and law firms for tax and legal advice. When questioned by the tax office in December 2008, Hogan said he was told to set up a "blind trust" to protect his assets and that he would have no control over the money.

The US court documents show that Hogan has mentioned in his US tax returns that he is the ultimate beneficiary of the Carthage Trust.

"The sole intended beneficiary of the Carthage Trust is Hogan, and this structure was adopted to maintain his privacy," the documents state.

"Hogan accurately has reported his status of beneficiary of the Carthage Trust on all tax returns and other governmental filings since he became a US resident in 2005."

The US District Court refused to let the case proceed on the grounds that it lacked sufficient connection with California.

"While Petitioner Schuyler Moore recounts a sordid tale of wayward fiduciaries and international fraudsters supposedly absconding with millions of dollars in funds from a Swiss bank account, he skips over one of the most fundamental elements of the American judicial system: personal jurisdiction," said US District Court judge Otis D Wright II. "Moore attempts to reach two foreign defendants, one a British Virgin Islands company and the other a British national and Swiss resident, with a petition originally filed in California state court. "But given the dearth of connections respondents have to California, the 'long arm of the law' is simply too short to reach them."

Hogan's Australian lawyer, Andrew Robinson declined to comment on the case yesterday.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/paul-hogans-battle-with-swiss-bank-for-stolen-32m/story-e6frq8zx-1226620346431>

## Germans have no right to lecture on free speech - April 14, 2013 1:00 am

Re: "EU visitors push for press freedom", April 10

I read in the April 10 edition of *The Nation* that an EU delegation, mainly from Germany, is hassling the Myanmar government over freedom of speech.

Yet, in the EU, if I speak of, write of, or broadcast anything about the Holocaust that implies anything except that 6 million is the correct number of victims, or that it did happen, I will be tried in a German court and jailed for 3-5 years. This happened to Germar Rudolf and

Ernst Zündel, and even Zündel's lawyer for defending him.

Maybe one of the EU delegates, on returning through Thailand for a few days, on a trip courtesy of European taxpayers, would explain what right the EU has to tell a sovereign state how to

set its free speech laws, while the EU itself sets laws against free speech, and with a 3-5-year jail term. Either there is free speech or there is not.

In the US there is free speech: one can document any evidence one has, so as to revise the numbers, or to cast doubt on the Holocaust having taken place. Having said that, Zündel was extradited from the US, placed in solitary in Canada, and whisked to court in Germany, and there jailed, being German born.

#### **Free-speech seeker - Bangkok**

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#### **Free Speech and more...**

With interest I read the letter Germans have no right to lecture on free speech, wherein the hypocrisy of Germany's current government on free expression is clearly expressed.

I, too, as an Australian citizen of German birth was held in 1999 for

seven months for daring to ask questions and to write on the Internet about matters concerning World War Two history, especially concerning the topic 'Holocaust-Shoah'.

The Germans have labelled such questioning an 'antisemitic', even a 'racist' act, and so it is illegal for Germans to question their own nation's historical record.

Recently, when our Senator Nick Xenophon was about to stir up trouble in Malaysia before the next election he was held at Kuala Lumpur Airport and immediately returned/deported to Australia. This lawmaker scoffed at my arrest at Heathrow Airport on 1 October 2008 on the strength of an European Arrest Warrant made out by Germany because I am being wanted there on the same charges I was imprisoned in 1999. Fortunately the British Common Law principles kicked in and after two

months I was not deported to Germany but was released – and I returned home via the USA where the First Amendment protects Free Expression. But this First Amendment is now under threat because there are individuals who have split free expression into free speech and hate speech – and anything that the authorities don't like is now considered hate speech. Any criticism of what the Israelis are doing to the Palestinians is considered to be 'hate speech'.

The various words designed to stifle any criticism are: hater, Holocaust denier, antisemite, racist, Nazi, xenophobe, and now terrorist! That's where we are at in our free and democratic western democracies!

Dr Fredrick Töben – Adelaide, Australia – 26 April 2013.

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/Germans-have-no-right-to-lecture-onfreespeech30204022.html>

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### **Wife's visit hours before Ben Zygier's death left spy in state of 'turmoil'**

**By: John Lyons, Middle East correspondent, [The Australian](#), April 26, 2013 12:00AM**

SEVERAL hours before Ben Zygier killed himself in Israel's most secure prison cell, the alleged Mossad spy had a meeting with his wife that put him into a state of "turmoil", a review of his case has revealed. His wife had conveyed "a difficult message" to her husband at the meeting, which may have had "a severe impact on his state of mind". The review, however, does not reveal what the "difficult message" was.

Two reviews of Zygier's case one by Israeli court authorities, the other by Israel's Attorney-General's Department were released last night. The latter concluded that criminal charges of negligence would not be pursued over Zygier's treatment in jail. The review of the dual Australian-Israeli citizen's case paints a tumultuous picture of the last day of his life.

It says that about seven hours before Zygier killed himself on December 15, 2010, the 34-year-old was visited in his prison near Tel Aviv by his wife and four-day-old daughter. The report says that, after his wife had left the cell, a distressed Zygier asked a prison officer to hand her a note. When the officer refused, Zygier tore up the note "and expressed his anger". Zygier's wife, in an attempt to calm him down, then convinced the officer to allow her to go back into his cell. The report says: "She re-entered his cell and after a few

minutes she went out and she was crying."

Zygier had moved to Israel in 2003 and began work in an Israeli law firm. He married an Israeli woman and the couple had two young children. It is believed that soon after arriving in Israel, Zygier joined Israel's overseas intelligence service, Mossad. Israel has never confirmed the exact charges against Zygier but it is believed that Mossad incarcerated Zygier after it learnt he had engaged in unauthorised intelligence work. Sources say Zygier had engaged in these activities not out of disloyalty to Israel but because he wanted to impress his superiors.

Although the Attorney-General's report said criminal charges of negligence would not be pursued, authorities will consider whether disciplinary action should be taken against officers from the Israel Prison Service on the possible ground that they should have better monitored Zygier.

Zygier had been placed in what was meant to be a suicide-proof cell designed for Yigal Amir, the extremist who assassinated former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The Attorney-General's report says Zygier met social workers 57 times during his eight months in prison and there was "no content of a suicidal nature" revealed.

One doctor's report, however, concluded: "Mental state, abnormal findings, depression, deteriorated mood, has trouble sleeping, wakes up early, poor appetite, dispirited, tearfulness."

The report says prison officials could not have known at the time Zygier committed suicide "the content of the meeting with family members" that occurred the day he killed himself.

A spokeswoman for Israel's courts said last night some details had been deleted for privacy reasons. "We deleted certain things, especially the content of that conversation," the spokeswoman said.

The Attorney-General's report says an examination of the case "raises the possibility that the content of the (family) meeting and 'the difficult message to the deceased' had a severe impact on his state of mind."

"The content of the conversations of the deceased with his family members are known today, yet they were not known to (prison) officials at the time and, thus, a reassessment of the deceased's suicide risk at the time was unattainable," it said.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/foreign-affairs/wifes-visit-hours-before-ben-zygiers-death-left-spy-in-state-of-turmoil/story-fn59nm2j-1226629642556>